


GAY & LESBIAN
HUMANIST ASSOCIATION
(GALHA)



**promoting a rational,
humanist approach to
homosexuality and
gay and lesbian rights
as human rights**

THE GAY AND LESBIAN HUMANIST ASSOCIATION (GALHA)

▼ Founding

Founded in 1979 in the aftermath of the *Gay News* blasphemy trial, GALHA is the only autonomous organisation worldwide for gay and lesbian Humanists. It has members in many parts of the UK and abroad.

▼ Affiliations

GALHA is affiliated to the International Humanist and Ethical Union, which has consultative status at the United Nations, UNESCO, UNICEF, the Council of Europe, the European Union and European Parliament. GALHA is also affiliated to the International Lesbian and Gay Association, which campaigns for lesbian and gay rights in all countries.

▼ Aims

GALHA provides a fellowship and voice for the many non-religious in the gay and lesbian community. It aims to promote an awareness and understanding of the Humanist outlook in that community, as well as bringing gay and lesbian rights to the attention of its kindred Humanist organisations.

▼ Campaigning

GALHA plays a part in the campaign to combat prejudice and discrimination against lesbians and gay men and to achieve their complete legal equality with heterosexuals. It also takes up issues of concern to Humanists. It lobbies MPs, the media, etc. via its Postal Action Scheme. It makes submissions to government committees and responds to government consultative documents concerning lesbian/gay and Humanist rights. It takes part in demonstrations and rallies concerning these rights.

▼ Links

GALHA is an integral part of the British Humanist movement and has close links with other organisations in it. These include the British Humanist Association and the National Secular Society, which have each consistently backed homosexual law reform and are in favour of making the age of sexual consent for gay men equal to that for heterosexuals. GALHA is represented on the Humanist Forum (a liaison committee) and it co-sponsors Humanist functions.

▼ Events and Stalls

GALHA holds regular meetings with speakers and discussions, socials, and residential weekend gatherings for members and friends. It sets up stalls at lesbian/gay and Humanist events – the Pride Festival, Winter Pride, conferences, etc.

▼ Ceremonies

GALHA arranges Humanist (non-religious) ceremonies: affirmation (for couples who want to make a declaration of their love and commitment), naming (for babies), and funeral. It has built up a network of officiants experienced in conducting these ceremonies.

▼ Membership

GALHA membership is open to all lesbians, gay men and bisexuals who broadly subscribe to the Humanist outlook and are concerned about lesbian and gay rights. It is also open to any heterosexual Humanists wishing to offer their moral and financial support.

▼ Membership Services

GALHA members are kept in close touch via a free lively quarterly magazine with news, articles, reviews, and postbag. Members can take advantage of a correspondence/hospitality service and a mail order service offering a selection of books on Humanism and lesbian/gay subjects.

HUMANISM: A BRIEF OUTLINE

Humanism is a view of life which has its roots in the teachings of ancient Greek and Chinese philosophers such as Epicurus and Confucius.

It is based on the belief that human problems can be solved only by human beings and not by reliance on some supposed supernatural power. Since Humanists are agnostic or atheist, they believe in the scientific explanation for human existence, namely evolution.

Humanists believe that human beings have to face their problems with their own moral and intellectual resources, using the accumulated knowledge and experience of humankind.

Humanist morality is based on concern for human dignity, welfare, happiness and fulfilment. Humanists see moral values not as edicts from a god, but as the principles upon which good human relationships depend. Such principles include being truthful and honest, accepting responsibility, co-operation for the common good and caring for others. These basic human values lie at the heart of societies. They are the conditions for social evolution. Humanists try to follow the Golden Rule 'do as you would be done by', a precept taught by atheistic philosophers hundreds of years before Christ.

Of particular relevance to lesbians and gays is the Humanist principle that all should be free to live their lives without interference, provided they do not exploit or harm others. Laws should not restrict individuals from taking their own decisions about their private lives.

Humanists have a long record of working for social reforms and today their concerns include human rights, world poverty, the environment, women's rights, lesbian and gay rights and animal rights.

HOMOSEXUALITY

some contrasting views

“The Church cannot accept such a parity (between the homosexual way of life and heterosexual marriage) and remain faithful to the insights which God has given through Scripture, tradition and reasoned reflection on experience”

Issues in Human Sexuality: A Statement by the House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England (1991).

“Sexuality is an enormously important characteristic of human beings, which finds many different kinds of expression. To say that we know that only one is ‘right’ shows a degree of intolerance which I find most objectionable”

Professor Sir Hermann Bondi, British Humanist Association President, in *Humanism: the Only Valid Foundation of Ethics* (1992).

“Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, Tradition has always declared that homosexual acts are ‘intrinsically disordered’. They are contrary to natural law. Under no circumstances can they be approved”

Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994).

“Humanists regard physical love as one of the greatest of human joys The way individuals express their sexuality is a matter for them alone, so long as they act with mutual love and consideration”

Jane Wynne Willson in *To Love and to Cherish: A Guide to Non-Religious Wedding Ceremonies* (1989).

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